

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau



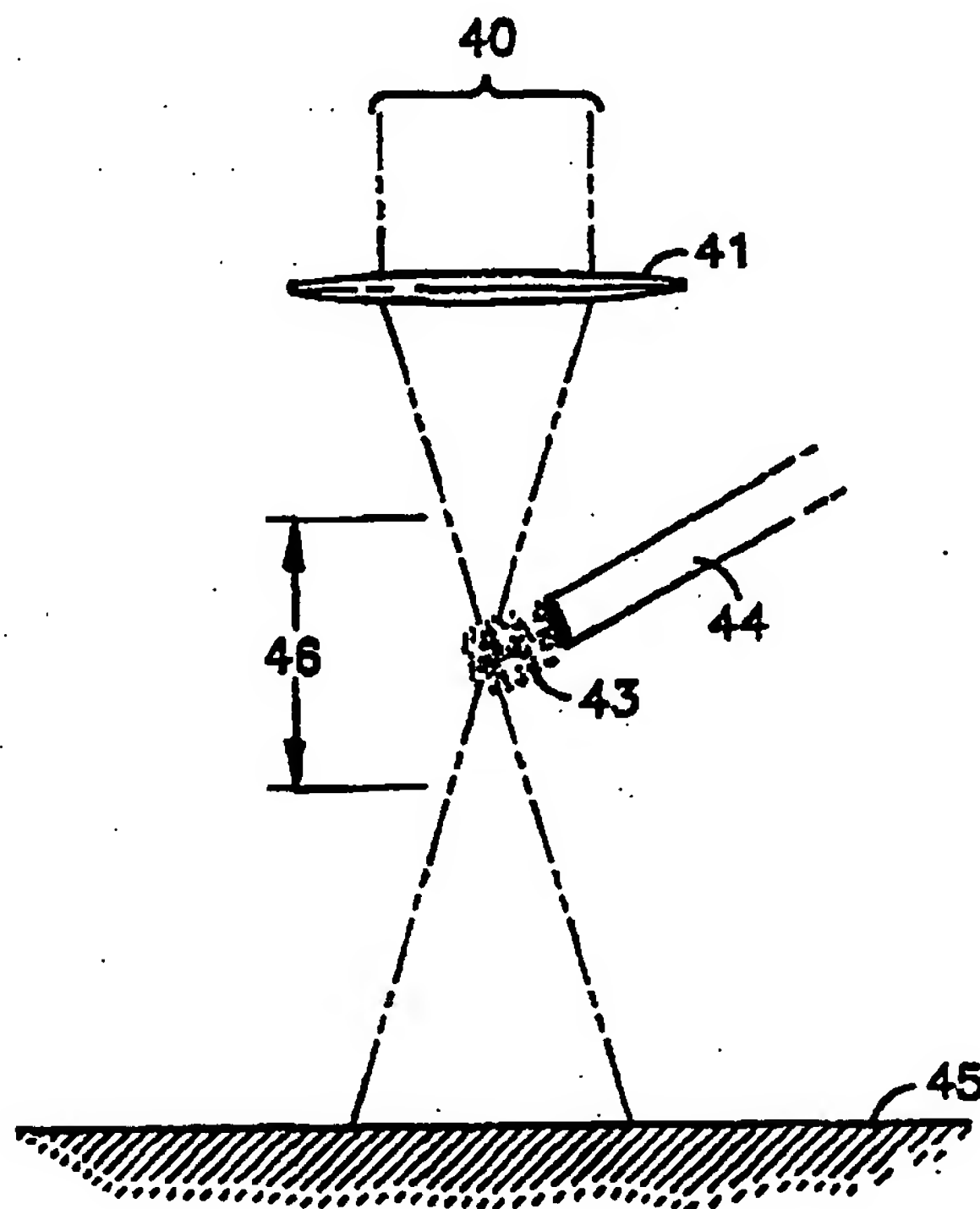
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁶ : B23K 26/00, F02K 9/64	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 95/29785 (43) International Publication Date: 9 November 1995 (09.11.95)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US95/05362 (22) International Filing Date: 1 May 1995 (01.05.95) (30) Priority Data: 08/235,586 29 April 1994 (29.04.94) US (71) Applicant: UNITED TECHNOLOGIES CORPORATION [US/US]; United Technologies Building, Hartford, CT 06101 (US). (72) Inventors: DALZELL, William, J., Jr. ; 18290 Jupiter Landings Drive, Jupiter, FL 33458 (US). JAFENSEN, Eric ; 716 South Pennock Lane, Jupiter, FL 33458 (US). (74) Agent: SOHL, Charles, E. ; United Technologies Corporation, Pratt & Whitney, 400 Main Street, East Hartford, CT 06108 (US).		(81) Designated States: JP, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published <i>With international search report.</i>

(54) Title: **FABRICATION OF TUBULAR WALL THRUST CHAMBERS FOR ROCKET ENGINES USING LASER POWDER INJECTION**

(57) Abstract

A method is taught for the joining of a plurality of heat exchange tubes having a predetermined shape, such as a "Mae West" form, so as to obtain a tube bundle comprising a rocket engine thrust chamber. These tubes are joined to each other by laser powder injection welding, so as to close any gaps between adjacent tubes, and to securely bond the tubes together. A structural jacket is then affixed to the tube bundle, either in situ, by continuing to laser powder injection coat the surface, using an appropriate jacket composition, flame spraying or plasma spraying a suitable alloy in place, or by brazing or welding a previously formed jacket in place. In an extension of the invention, laser powder injection is performed to provide a repair method for the tube bundle, should the bundle be damaged or exhibit imperfect joining.



FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AT	Austria	GB	United Kingdom	MR	Mauritania
AU	Australia	GE	Georgia	MW	Malawi
BB	Barbados	GN	Guinea	NE	Niger
BE	Belgium	GR	Greece	NL	Netherlands
BF	Burkina Faso	HU	Hungary	NO	Norway
BG	Bulgaria	IE	Ireland	NZ	New Zealand
BJ	Benin	IT	Italy	PL	Poland
BR	Brazil	JP	Japan	PT	Portugal
BY	Belarus	KE	Kenya	RO	Romania
CA	Canada	KG	Kyrgyzstan	RU	Russian Federation
CF	Central African Republic	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	SD	Sudan
CG	Congo	KR	Republic of Korea	SE	Sweden
CH	Switzerland	KZ	Kazakhstan	SI	Slovenia
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	LI	Liechtenstein	SK	Slovakia
CM	Cameroon	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
CN	China	LV	Latvia	TD	Chad
CS	Czechoslovakia	MC	Monaco	TG	Togo
CZ	Czech Republic	MD	Republic of Moldova	TJ	Tajikistan
DE	Germany	MG	Madagascar	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
DK	Denmark	ML	Mali	UA	Ukraine
ES	Spain	MN	Mongolia	US	United States of America
FI	Finland			UZ	Uzbekistan
FR	France			VN	Viet Nam
GA	Gabon				

FABRICATION OF TUBULAR WALL THRUST CHAMBERS FOR ROCKET ENGINES USING LASER POWDER INJECTION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 This invention relates to rocket engines, and particularly to the fabrication of tubular structures suitable for use as regeneratively cooled rocket engine thrust chambers.

Description of the Prior Art

10 Rocket engines commonly comprise thrust chambers which are subjected to extremely high temperatures as a result of the combustion and acceleration of propellants. As a result, the walls of the thrust chambers, combustion chambers, and nozzle assemblies are frequently subjected to cooling, by flow of a coolant through tubes or channels forming the inner wall of the thrust chamber. In effect, one may consider the thrust
15 chamber to be a high pressure heat exchange unit within which the propellants are burned, surrounded by a structural jacket. As there is a continuing need for rockets of larger weight bearing capacity, new ways are sought to more economically provide such thrust chambers while improving the thrust and heat resistance thereof, and preventing leakage
20 of highly pressurized gasses from the interior of the thrust chamber to the exterior.

25 A typical example of such a thrust chamber is shown in US Patent 3,208,132, of Escher, which discloses a rocket chamber produced by forming pre-shaped coolant flow passages within two sheets, and subsequently welding or brazing the formed sheets together to form individual flow passages. However, the integrity of welds thus formed is difficult to inspect and verify.

In US Patent 3,190,070, Neu teaches formation of a rocket chamber from a plurality of pre-formed coolant conduits of trapezoidal cross section in side-by-side relationship, said conduits being reduced in cross section at the exit nozzle throat to increase coolant flow velocity.

5 Further, Stockel et al, in US Patent 3,595,025, teach a rocket chamber inner wall having grooves therein, which form cooling channels when the inner wall is mated with an outer wall which is galvanized thereto. Such grooves require extensive, and costly, machining and labor.

10 Additional patents which relate to the preparation of rocket engines include US Patent 3,127,667 of Tumavicus, which teaches a double thickness wall construction; US Patent 3,690,103, of Dederra et al, which relates to joining tubular elements, filling the joints therebetween, and electroforming a rigid outer layer over the exterior of the tubular elements; US Patent 3,501,916, of Butter et al, which relates to the form
15 of the tubular elements suitable for use in rocket engine combustion chambers; and US Patent 3,349,464, of Becker et al, which teaches additional configurations of elongated hollow tubes which may be used, and methods for the formation thereof. Further, US Patent 2,844,939, of Schultz, teaches a tube bundle combustion chamber having a flexible
20 substantially non-porous surrounding envelope of neoprene; US Patent 3,224,678, of Rosman, teaches a modular thrust chamber wherein individual tube bundles are connected to each other; US Patent 3,714,695, of Beeson, teaches welding together a blanket of tubes and then forming the blanket to any required contour, as opposed to contouring the individual tubes prior to welding them together; and, also, US
25 Patent 3,897,316 of Huang, which relates to a composite channelled wall construction.

30 However, the methods proposed heretofore for the construction of tubular wall combustion chambers have suffered from a number of problems well known to those skilled in the art, such as in attainable

cooling capacity, passage size limitations, material selection, and fabrication capability. Accordingly, there is needed a method for the preparation of rocket thrust chambers wherein the cooling passages are easily and economically manufactured, and securely bonded to each other and to the associated structural jacket. It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a method for bonding together the tubes of a heat exchange unit of a rocket thrust chamber in an economic, rapid, and secure manner, with improved resistance to leakage of propellant combustion product, and minimal metallurgical effect upon the tubes themselves. It is a further object of this invention to provide a tubular thrust chamber construction having an integrally formed outer structural surface.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a process for forming a rocket thrust chamber which provides for secure and metallurgically sound bonds between adjacent coolant tubes. According to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, a plurality of pre-formed heat exchange tubes are placed side by side in a jig, said jig having a correspondingly predetermined shape, such as a "Mae West" form, thus forming a tube bundle of the desired configuration. These tubes are joined to each other by laser powder injection welding, so as to close the gaps between the adjacent tubes and securely bond the tubes together. The structural jacket is then affixed to the tube bundle. This may be done in-situ, by continuing to laser powder injection coat the surface, using an appropriate jacket composition, or by welding a previously formed jacket in place. In an extension of the invention, laser powder injection is performed to provide a repair method for the tube bundle, should the bundle be damaged or exhibit imperfect joining.

Thus, the present invention comprises a method for fabricating a rocket thrust chamber having a combustion chamber, a throat section, and a nozzle section, said method comprising the steps of: forming a plurality of elongated hollow tubes having a configuration conforming to the shape of a rocket thrust chamber; forming an elongated hollow member by circumferentially placing said hollow tubes in parallel side-by-side relationship and in equally spaced encircling relationship to a common longitudinal axis; applying a filler material to the areas between said tubes in side-by-side relationship so as to completely fill the areas between said tubes and to bond said tubes to each other; and joining said tubes to a structural support jacket surrounding said elongated hollow member; wherein said filler material is applied by laser injection welding.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 illustrates a schematic of a tubular thrust chamber in accordance with the present invention.

Figure 2 represents an end elevation view of the thrust chamber shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a vertical cross section of the thrust chamber wall taken at line 3 - 3 of Figure 1.

Figure 4 illustrates a schematic of a conventional laser powder injection focusing arrangement.

Figure 5 illustrates a schematic of the laser powder injection focusing arrangement of the present invention.

Figure 6 illustrates a schematic of a laser powder injection coating apparatus suitable for use in the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As previously indicated, this invention relates to the construction of the side, or containment, walls of the combustion chamber, throat, and exhaust nozzle (hereinafter collectively referred to as the thrust chamber) of a rocket engine. The wall construction set forth provides a wall of great strength for a minimum of material, thus making the rocket highly efficient from the standpoint of the weight to power ratio. The present invention makes it possible to achieve a considerably higher thrust output for a given weight of thrust chamber than has previously been possible with more conventionally constructed rocket engines, such as those having solid walls, or those having double walls of relatively thin material formed by placement of a structural jacket about, and concentric with an inner wall. The improvements in efficiency shall become apparent from the discussion which follows

The state of the art of present day rocket engine manufacture focuses upon two methods for the preparation of thrust chambers. The first of these two methods deals with configurations which may be referred to as the channel type, and is exemplified by US Patents 3,595,025, and 3,897,316, previously discussed. The second method deals with the preparation of tube type thrust chambers, as exemplified by US Patents 3,208,132, 3,501,916, and 3,690,103, previously discussed. It is known that thrust chambers of the channel type of construction are capable of higher pressure operation, and thus higher thrust, but they suffer from lower heat exchange capability, and cost considerably more than the tube type thrust chambers. Conversely, the tube type chambers are limited in power capability, but more economical to manufacture than the channel type chambers. The present invention is related to a tube type thrust chamber of greater thrust capacity, and is directed to a method for the more economical manufacture thereof, and to a method whereby

defects may readily be repaired and corrected without scrapping the entire tube bundle.

At present, tubular thrust chambers are formed by joining a large number of very precisely formed and aligned individual metal tubes, of such a material as 347 Stainless Steel, to form a substantially circular chamber of compound curvature. Each such tube is soldered, welded, or brazed to the adjacent tubes, to form a solid containment vessel, and then an outer jacket is attached to the exterior surface of the tube bundle. The brazing of these tubes together requires a very precise positioning of the tubes relative to each other, since the gap between them must be very closely controlled and very uniform, conventionally with a maximum tolerable gap of 0.008 inches for successful brazing. The application of the jacket comprises preparation of carefully shaped and sized metal sheets, which are brazed or welded in place on the tube bundle during or subsequent to the brazing of the tubes.

The present invention contemplates joining tubes of various materials, such as copper alloys, stainless steel, or nickel alloys, without causing unacceptable damage to or modification of the properties of the tubes, by a method other than by brazing. The process disclosed is capable of depositing an alloy layer between the tubes of a bundle by laser powder injection, so as to fill the space between the tubes prior to subsequent application of a structural jacket by laser powder injection, plasma spray, or welding techniques. It is thus also considered within the scope of the present invention to continue the application of filler material by laser powder injection, beyond the simple filling and bonding of the gap between the tubes, to cover the tubes with a selected alloy or group of alloys to form the structural jacket in-situ.

As indicated, the tubes which may be joined may be of any composition suitable for use in tube type thrust chambers. Suitable nickel based superalloys would include such alloys as INCONEL 718

(Ni - 19 Cr - 0.05 C - 18.0 Fe - 0.9 Ti - 0.6 Al - 3.0 Mo - 5.2 Cb/Ta), INCONEL 625 (Ni - 21.5 Cr - 9.0 Mo - 3.65 Cb/Ta), and HAYNES A242 (Ni - 25 Al - 8 Cr). Suitable stainless steels would include those designated as 347 (Fe - 18 Cr - 10.5 Ni), 304 (Fe - 19 Cr - 9.5 Ni), and 316 (Fe - 13 Ni - 18 Cr - 2.25 Mo). Suitable copper alloys, the metals of choice because of their high conductivity, would include NARLOY Z (vacuum processed Cu - 3 Ag - 0.5 Zr), NASA Z (argon processed Cu - 3 Ag - 0.5 Zr), or GLIDCOP (OFHC Cu plus 1.5 percent finely divided dispersed Al), and the like. GLIDCOP, while expensive, has superior high temperature strength characteristics, and is very suitable for use in the present invention. Since the joining method of the present invention is less demanding than the brazing techniques presently available, it is possible to lay up or jig the tube bundle with less stringent tolerances and less demanding alignment. For example, it is possible to bridge a gap of up to about 0.030 inches using laser powder injection, as opposed to a limitation of less than 0.008 inches for brazing. Since the laser powder injection method of bonding the tubes together permits filling of greater gaps between the surfaces to be joined, this permits much greater leeway in assembly of the tube bundle, leading to substantial time and cost advantages.

The metal used for bonding the tubes together may be either a conventional braze material such as would be suitable for brazing the substrate material, the substrate material itself, or a compatible alloy thereof. Thus, the filler material may be any of the materials listed above for the tubes themselves, a braze material such as gold-germanium, a diffusion bonding material such as copper, or other braze or diffusion bonding materials known to those skilled in the art. The laser powder injection bonding of the tubes is most conveniently conducted on the outside surface of the tube bundle, i.e. the exterior of the thrust chamber. After the spaces between the individual tube segments have been filled by

laser powder injection of the filler material, the laser powder injection may be continued to cover the tube surfaces, if so desired, to form a smooth outer surface.

5 The thus joined tube bundle may then be surrounded by the structural jacket alloy, preferably a high strength, hydrogen resistant alloy having a low coefficient of expansion. Suitable materials for the structural jacket include such material as 347 Stainless Steel, INCONEL 718, INCONEL 625, or a copper alloy such as GLIDCOP. The structural jacket may be applied by welding or brazing sheets of the appropriately
10 configured material in place, or alternatively, by electroplating the nickel alloys in a conventional electroplating bath. However, since electroplating a sufficient thickness, e.g. 0.30 to 0.50 inches, of a nickel alloy, requires up to six months of plating, this method is less desirable. A more efficient method for formation of the structural jacket over the laser
15 powder injection bonded tube bundles prepared in accordance with the present invention is to plasma spray, or flame spray, an appropriate alloy in place. Such an alloy may include 347 Stainless Steel, INCONEL 718, INCONEL 625, GLIDCOP, or other appropriate alloys, chosen so as to be compatible with the subsurface tubes and the filler material deposited to bond the tubes into a unitary bundle. Still further, the structural jacket
20 may be formed by laser powder injection of the alloy material, rather than by plasma spray. This is particularly of value to avoid over-heating or stressing of the substrate tube materials or the filler material by high temperatures, since the laser powder injection method does not result in
25 high temperatures at the point of deposition.

An additional advantage of the present invention is the capability of easily repairing a bonded tube assembly after completion of the bonding operation and inspection of the thrust chamber. If any imperfectly bonded gaps between the tubes are detected, the gap may readily be
30 subjected to a laser powder injection of filler material so as to repair the

defect. Frequently, if a brazing defect is found after bonding the tubes with a braze material, the entire tube bundle is scrapped, since subjecting the assembly to a second braze cycle frequently results in wicking of the braze material away from the groove between adjacent tubes, and loss of continuity of the bonding. However, since laser powder injection does not result in severe heating of the substrate, this technique may be used for repair of defectively brazed tubes. Indeed, the laser powder injection method permits repair of bonding defects even after the structural jacket has been applied over the exterior surface of the thrust chamber, since laser powder injection repairs may be made to the interior of the tube assembly to fill minor gaps in the bonds between the individual tubes, which gaps may be formed during the application of the structural jacket.

In Figure 1 is shown a rocket engine thrust chamber 10, having longitudinal axis A - B, a head or injector 20, composite wall assembly 11, combustion chamber 15, throat 16, and nozzle 17. The composite wall assembly 11 comprises the structural jacket, 12, and a plurality of cooling passages, composed of a group or bundle of formed and shaped individual longitudinal tubes, 13 and 14, placed side by side to form a substantially circular chamber of compound curvature, running axially from a liquid coolant manifold, not shown, at the end of nozzle 17, to the head or injector, 20. The tubes are joined to the outer structural jacket, 12, of metal, formed as previously indicated, which acts both to seal the thrust chamber and prevent leakage of gases therefrom, and to resist the pressure generated therein by the combustion of rocket fuels. The tubes, 13 and 14, serve as the wall of the thrust chamber, and constitute a series of longitudinal coolant passages throughout the length of the chamber. These tubes are made of easily formed material of high heat conductivity, such as copper, and are formed to shape by the use of common forming dies with concurrent application of internal pressure to prevent collapse of the tube. After forming, the tubes have a longitudinally curved shape

substantially as shown in figure 1. The thrust chamber wall, 11, is cooled by the flow of liquid propellant through the coolant tubes, 13 and 14, in the direction indicated in Figure 1 by the arrows, i.e. from the nozzle end of the chamber toward the injector.

5 Figure 2 illustrates an end elevation of the thrust chamber, 10, of Figure 1, in cross section, showing the wall assembly 11, having structural jacket 12, and cooling tubes 13 and 14. Also shown are the thrust chamber throat, 16, and the nozzle 17.

10 Figure 3, a cross-section taken along line 3 - 3 of Figure 1, shows, in simplified schematic form, a plurality of thin wall metal coolant tubes, 13, adjacent to and aligned with each other, which are joined to each other and to the internal surface of the structural jacket 12. The tubes are joined to each other by laser powder injection of filler material, 18, at the joints 19 between the tubes. The tubes are bonded to the structural jacket as set forth herein. As an alternative, the structural jacket may comprise an in-situ formed layer of coating material, rather than the pre-formed and assembled structure illustrated.

15 In accordance with the present invention, filler powder is injected into the path of a pulsed (or continuous) YAG laser, or a CO₂ laser, focused at a point above the surfaces being joined or coated so as to avoid melting or overheating of the surfaces themselves, and the powder is heated to a plastic state and deposited upon the substrate, such as the joint between adjacent coolant tubes. This produces a highly dense and uniform layer of the filler material, which is selected for compatibility with the tube composition, and preferably exhibits a low coefficient of expansion. This process may be automated and scaled to meet manufacturing requirements. In addition to application of the filler material to the joint or gap between the tubes, such material may be laser powder injected as a coating over the tube bundle, so as to form the structural jacket in-situ.

20

25

30

5 In a conventional laser spray powder application, or laser cladding operation, for which a focusing arrangement is illustrated schematically in Figure 4, a high intensity laser beam, 30, is focused by a final focal lens, 31, on substrate 35, to melt a small volume of surface metal, forming melt pool 32. The powdered metal alloying material, 33, which is injected by the powder injector, 34, melts in this pool, and is dispersed therein, altering the composition of the surface layer in the desired manner. Relative movement of the laser beam and the workpiece causes the molten material to rapidly chill, which can result in hardening due to phase changes in the solid metal. In conventional laser cladding apparatus and procedures of this nature, the laser beam and the powder exit the laser spray nozzle essentially coaxially, and have the same focal point, upon the surface of the substrate being coated.

10 However, in the present invention, the focal point is not on the surface of the article as it is in conventional practice, but at a point slightly above the surface of the tubes to be joined. As shown in Figure 5, the laser beam 40 is focused by a final focusing lens, 41, at a point above the tubes, e.g. substrate 45, thus forming a defocused hot zone 46, into which the powder 43 is injected via powder injection means 44. In this manner, with appropriate control of laser beam intensity and focus, in conjunction with choice of powder size and flow rate, we have been able to heat the powder particles sufficiently that they are plastically deformed at the point of impact upon the substrate, but not to the point at which the microstructure of the filler or coating material, or the substrate, is altered. That is, the primary matrix alloy microstructure is unchanged by the rapid laser heating of the powder, followed by the sudden quenching resulting from deposition on a relatively cool substrate, which acts as a heat sink. Further, a rapid build-up of material is possible, so as to fill in the joint or gap between the tubes rapidly and uniformly.

5 The actual physical state of the powder at its highest temperature is not fully understood, but it is believed that the powder is fully melted, and resolidified at such a rapid rate such that insufficient migration or coalescence of the oxide particulates occurs to affect the microstructure of the material. Alternatively, it is considered possible that the surfaces of individual powder grains are subjected to melting while the core, or central portions of the powder grains remain in a semi-solid, or solid state, such that boundaries between the individual powder grains coalesce. In either event, there are no longer any boundaries between the individual powder grains as deposited. For purposes of this application, this process shall be referred to as non-equilibrium melting.

10 The capability to achieve this result is dependent upon a large number of factors, chief among which are the laser intensity, the powder composition and size distribution, the powder flow rate, the distance of the focal point above the substrate, and relative motion of the laser and the workpiece. While the present invention permits the deposition of filler metals on any substrate to which the metal will bond, it is noted that the bonding is not a diffusion bond, or a complete metallurgical bond, since the surface layer of the substrate is not subjected melting, either substantially or completely. The deposits which are obtained, however, are very uniform, of high density (approaching 100 percent of theoretical). Moreover, multiple coating layers may be applied very rapidly to achieve any desired thickness of the deposit, since no heat treatment of the substrate, or of the deposit, is necessary to smooth, anneal, or densify the resultant filler metal. Further, it is envisioned that one is able to alter the composition of individually applied layers of metal, permitting the establishment of gradients or variations of composition from the tube surface to the outer surface. This variant lends itself to the in-situ fabrication of the structural jacket, by permitting one to apply one specific filler material to bond the tubes together, and then to modify the coating

15
20
25
30

material so as to provide a structural jacket of different composition and properties.

5 An apparatus suitable for the present invention is schematically presented in Figure 6, wherein target 55 is positioned on robotic work station 52, within an optional laser safety enclosure 53. Laser source 50, including focusing lens 51, is positioned away from the target at a desired distance, in proximity to powder injectors 54, which are in turn fed by line 56 from powder source 57. The equipment is situated in such a manner that the filler metal powder from the powder source 57 is injected into a defocused hot zone of the laser beam, 58, at a preselected distance from the target. The powder, which may be from about minus 100 to about plus 325 mesh in size, is preferably from about minus 100 to plus 200 mesh (75 to 150 microns) and is preferably carried at high speed in an inert gas stream, such as argon, is heated and virtually simultaneously deposited on the target, the joint between adjacent tubes, which is in motion relative to the laser source. The work station is preferably robotic, with from three to six degrees of freedom, and may be powered hydraulically, electrically, pneumatically, or by some combination of the same. The robotic work station may be computer controlled in conventional manner. It is noted that the work piece may, alternatively, remain stationary, while the laser and powder injection nozzles move relative to the target. The laser may, for example, be a pulsed YAG laser, although continuous lasers are also useful in the present invention, providing that the laser is metallurgically compatible with the alloy to be deposited. Various types of laser may be used, provided they have focusing capability, and may be used in conjunction with a typical powder spray nozzle. It is critical that the laser be focused in such a manner that it does not focus directly upon the substrate, since melting of the surface is specifically to be avoided. A secondary laser or other means may be utilized for alignment purposes. The laser work parameters are computer

controlled, and are linked to the robotic work station so as to achieve an optimized high reliability deposition.

5 The spray nozzle is selected so as to provide a continuous flow of particles of the metal powder to a defocused hot zone, at a point slightly distant from the substrate being coated, as illustrated in Figure 5. The injected powder is heated by the laser, to a temperature at which the powder is in a plastic state, or to a state of non-equilibrium melting. The coating material, in the form of finely divided powder in a plastic state, carried in a rapidly moving stream of inert gas, then impacts upon the
10 relatively cold surfaces of the target joint between the tubes, and is distributed thereupon. The rapid quenching affect (estimated to be at least 10^4 °F per second) of impact upon the surface insures rapid cooling of the filler material, such that the filler is not metallurgically altered. Since the powder is subjected to non-equilibrium melting, and the substrate is not
15 heated by the laser to the extent that melting of the surface layer occurs, the deposited layer does not alloy with the substrate, but coats the surface thereof. The focal point of the laser may be from about 0.10 inches to about 1.0 inches above the surface of the work piece. The flow rate of powder may be controlled by control of the carrier gas, such as argon, to
20 deposit the powder at a rate of from about 8 grams/minute to about 20 grams per minute. It is to be noted, that while the above discussion refers to the use of filler metal alloy powder, the use of wire feed to the laser injector is of course within the scope of the present invention. It is also noted that various laser types may be utilized, such as a YAG laser in the
25 power range from about 25 to 400 watts, or a CO₂ laser of from about 25 to 6,000 watts. The laser may be operated in either the continuous or the pulsed mode.

EXAMPLE:

5 Copper tubes of a size conventionally used in the preparation of tube type thrust chambers were formed in the configuration of a rocket thrust chamber, as illustrated in Figure 1. The tubes were placed in tight proximity to one another, encircling a "Mae West" form. A YAG laser was set up for deposition of 347 stainless steel from a wire source, and used to deposit a bonding layer of the stainless steel between adjacent tubes. A strong bond was formed between the tubes, with a minimal amount of heat affected zone developed outside the actual coating area, and no defective bonding or unfilled gap between the tubes. The bond was at least the equivalent of the bonding observed using conventional brazing techniques, and was considerably more convenient and cost effective to achieve.

10 It is to be understood that the above description of the present invention is subject to considerable modification, change, and adaptation by those skilled in the art, and that such modifications, changes, and adaptations are to be considered to be within the scope of the present invention, which is set forth by the appended claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for fabricating a rocket thrust chamber having a combustion chamber, a throat section, and a nozzle section, said method comprising the steps of: forming a plurality of elongated hollow tubes having a configuration conforming to the shape of a rocket thrust chamber; forming an elongated hollow member by circumferentially placing said hollow tubes in parallel side-by-side relationship and in equally spaced encircling relationship to a common longitudinal axis; applying a filler material to the areas between said tubes in side-by-side relationship so as to completely fill the areas between said tubes and to bond said tubes to each other; and joining said tubes to a structural support jacket surrounding said elongated hollow member; wherein said filler material is applied by laser injection welding.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said tubes are of a material selected from the group consisting of copper alloys, nickel alloys, and stainless steel alloys.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein said tubes are of a material selected from the group consisting of Cu - 3 Ag - 0.5 Zr, and Cu - 1.5 Al.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein said filler material is selected from the group consisting of copper alloys, nickel alloys, stainless steel alloys, brazing materials, and diffusion bonding materials.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said filler material is the same material as the composition of the tubes.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said structural jacket is applied by a method selected from the group consisting of brazing a sheet material in place, welding a sheet material in place, electroplating a nickel based alloy to the exterior of the elongated hollow member, plasma spraying, flame spraying, or laser injection coating.

5

7. The method of claim 6, wherein said jacket is of the same material as the filler material.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said jacket is applied by plasma spraying.

10

9. The method of claim 7, wherein said jacket is applied by flame spraying.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein said jacket is applied by laser injection coating.

15

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said tubes comprise Cu - 15 Al, said filler comprises a stainless steel alloy, and said jacket comprises a stainless steel alloy.

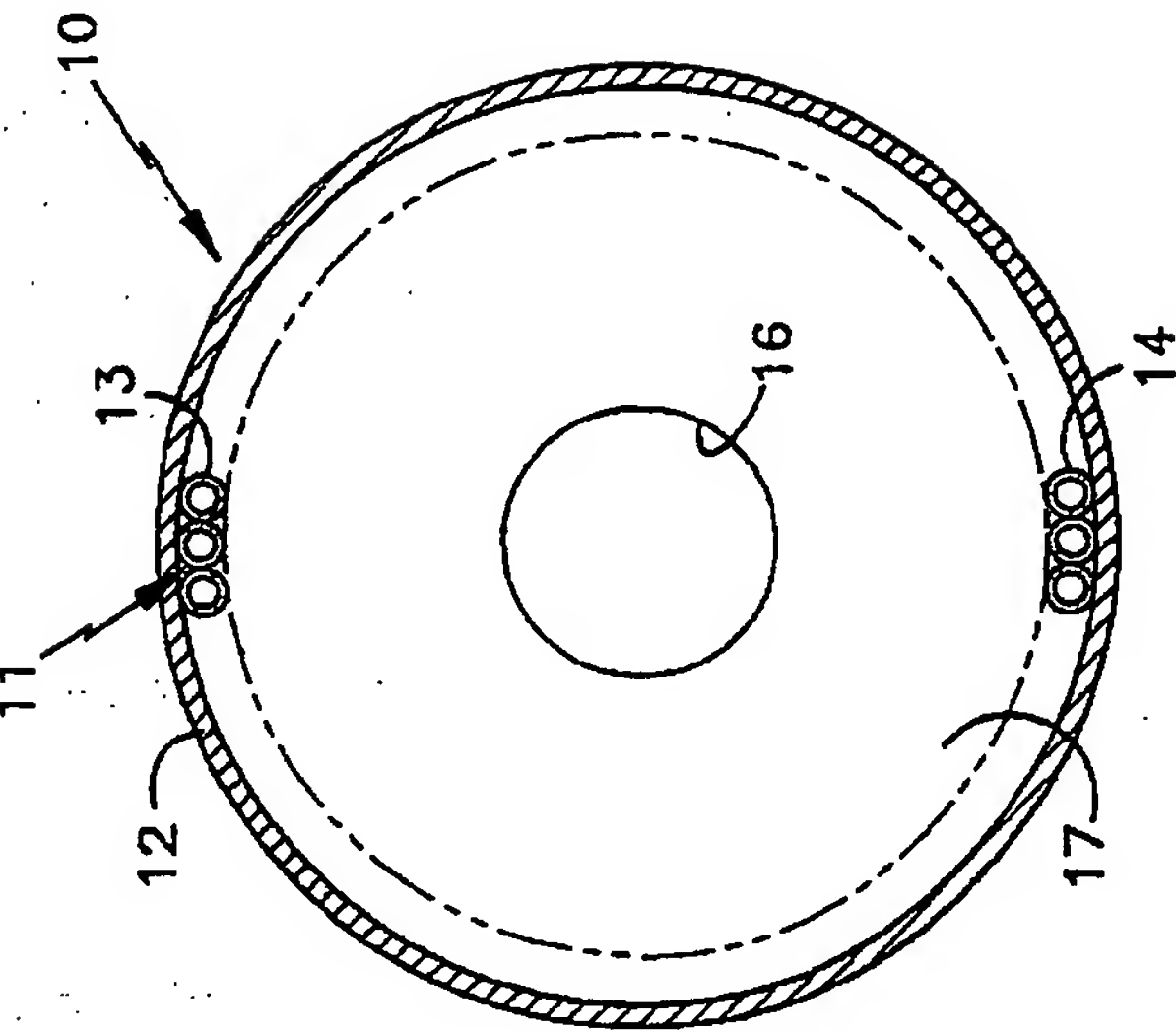


fig. 2

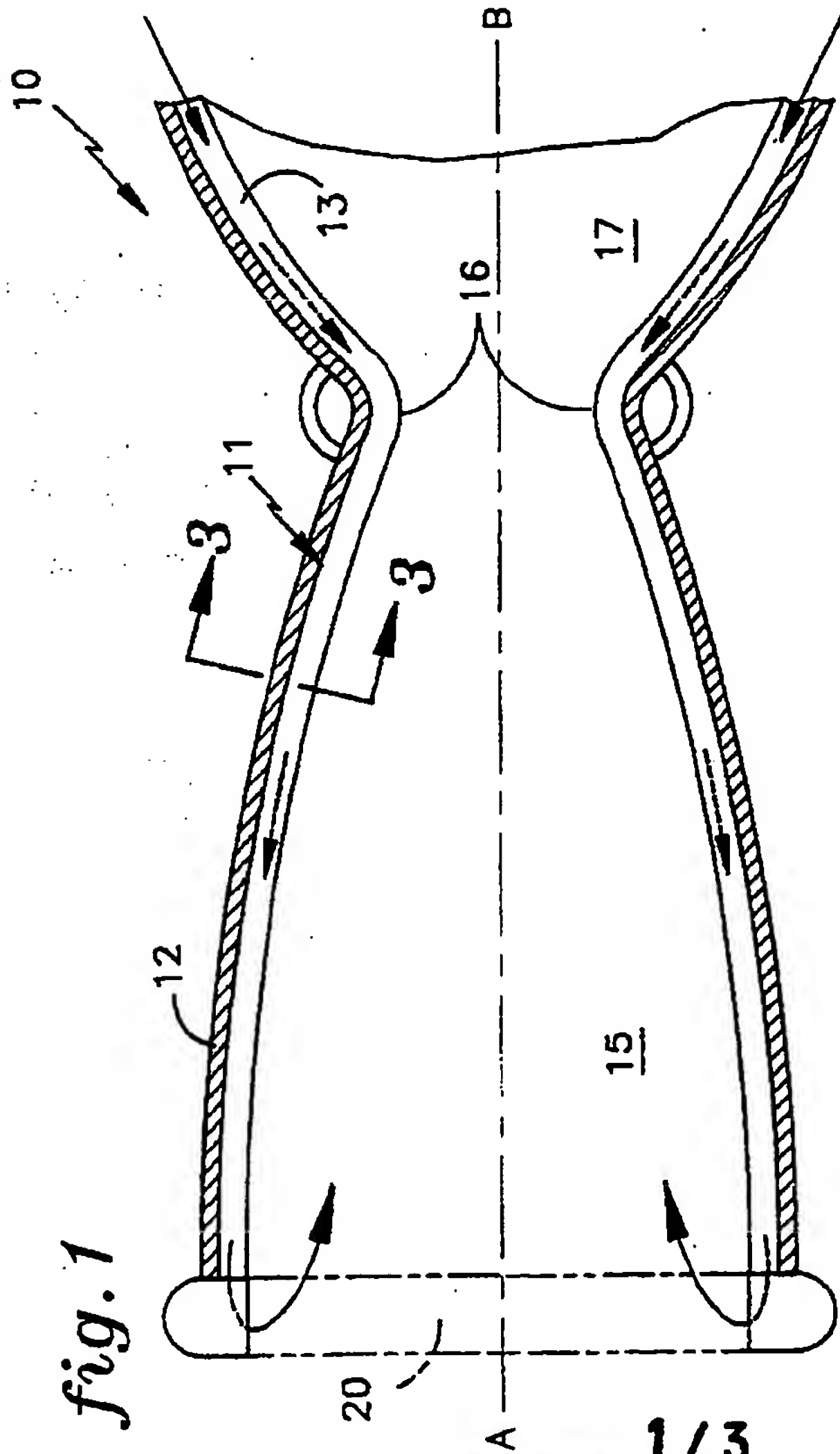


fig. 1

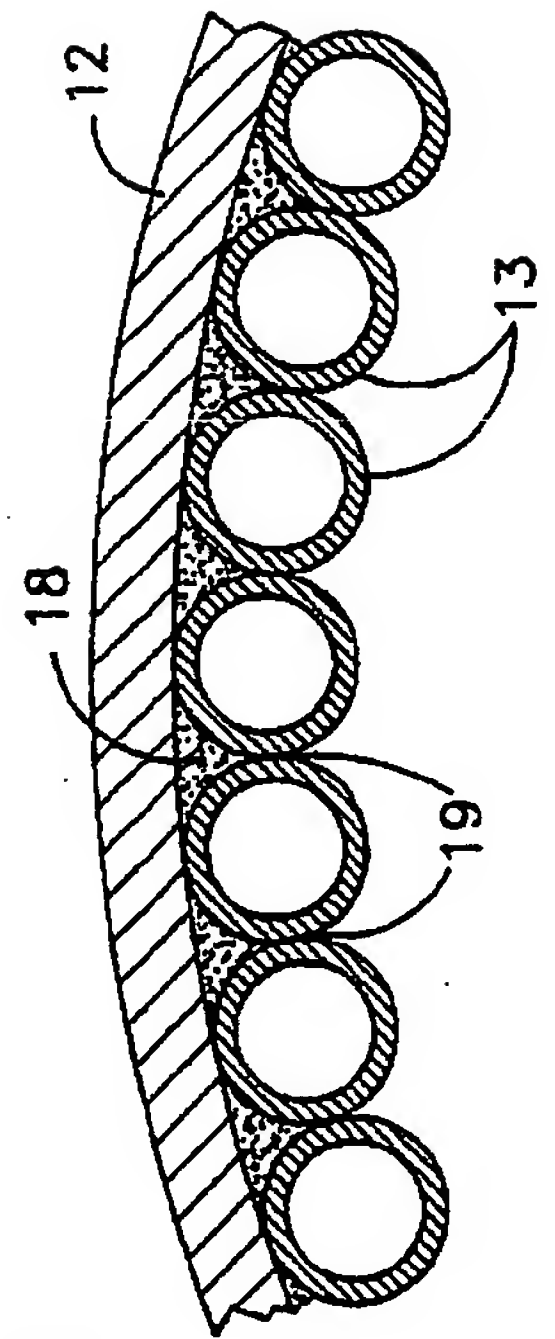


fig. 3
prior art

fig. 4

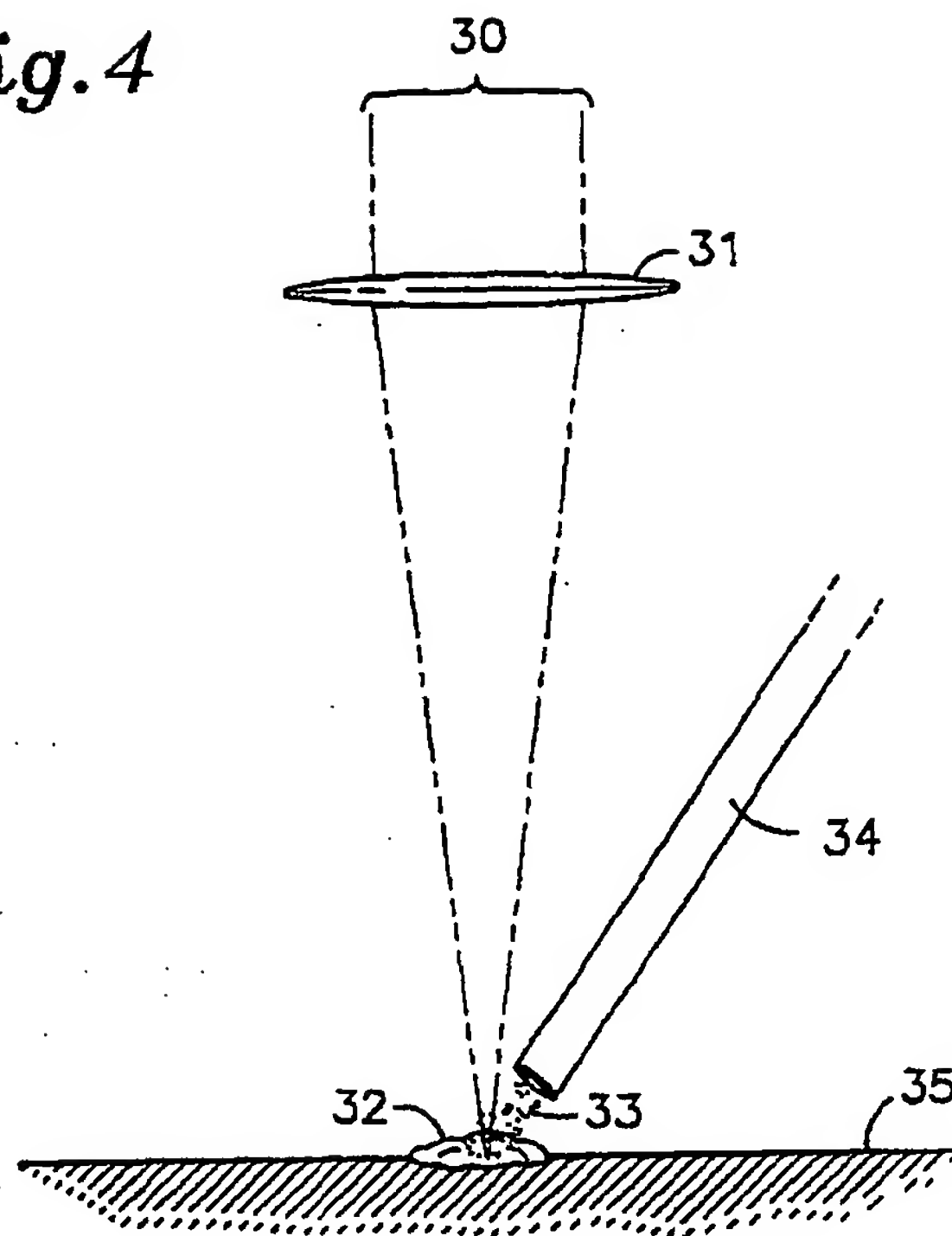


fig. 5

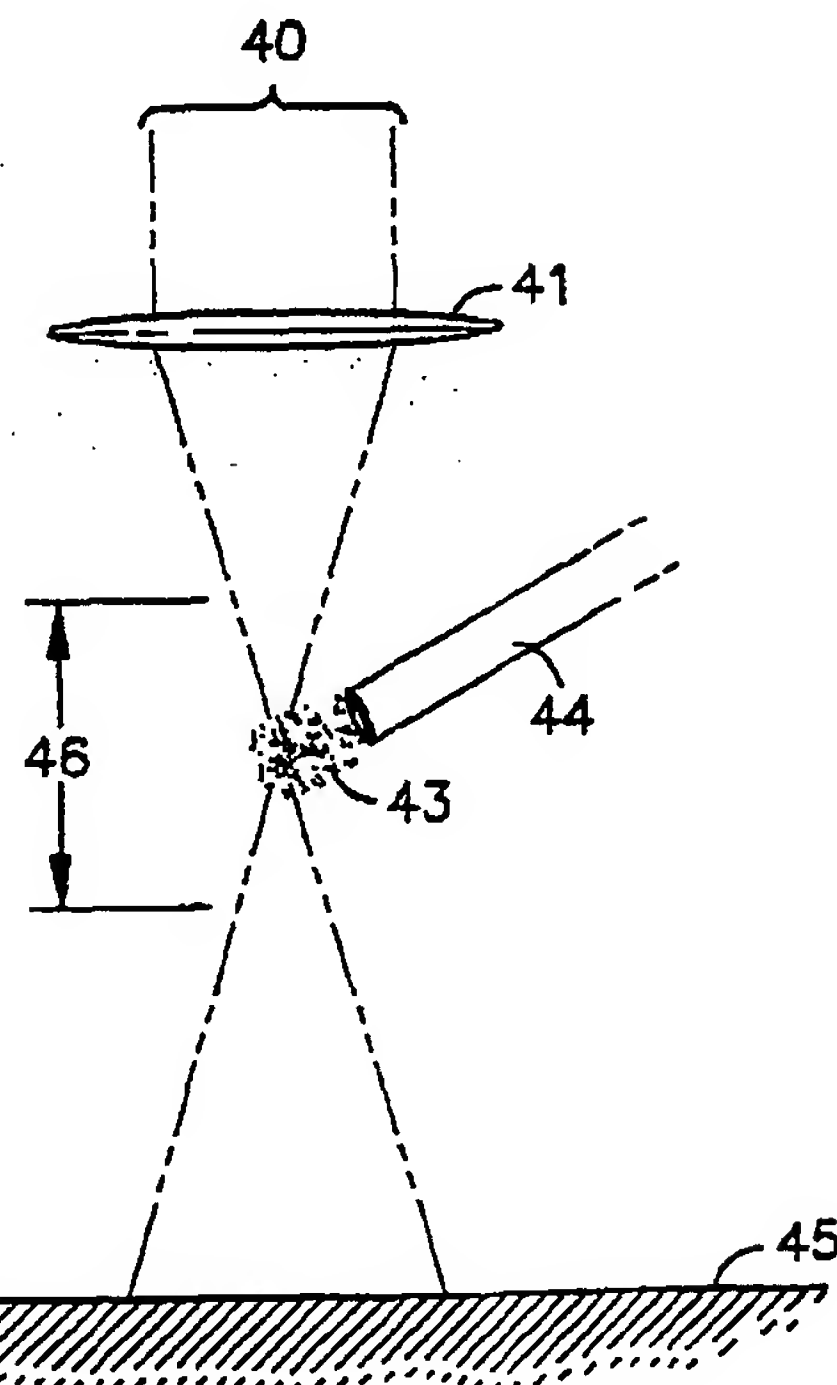
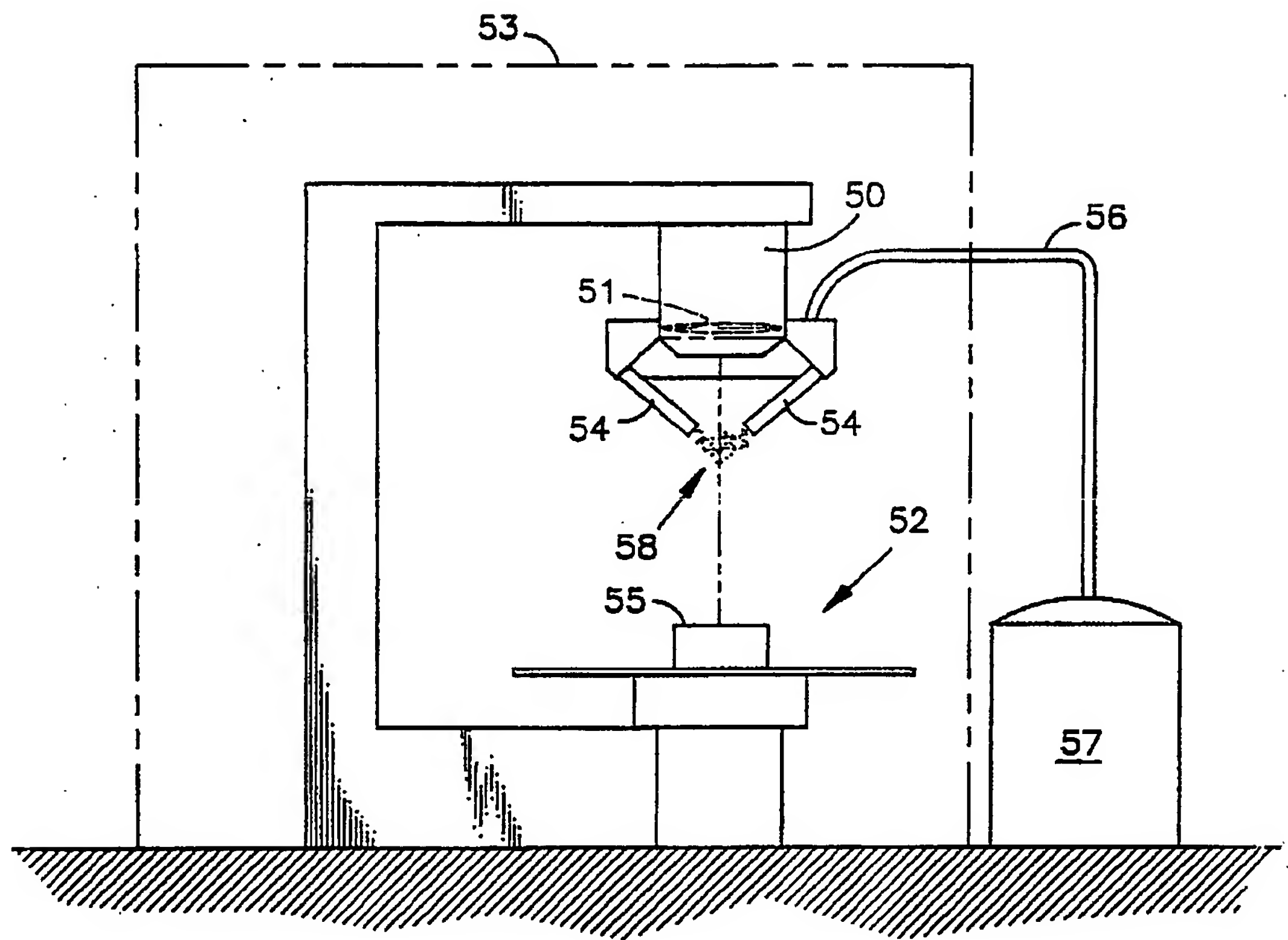


fig. 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Application No
PCT/US 95/05362

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 B23K26/00 F02K9/64

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 B23K F02K C23C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US,A,2 844 939 (SCHULTZ) 29 July 1958 cited in the application see the whole document ---	1-11
Y	WELDING JOURNAL INCLUDING: WELDING RESEARCH, vol. 70, no. 8, 1 August 1991 pages 37-40, XP 000212726 IRVING B 'HIGH-POWERED LASERS GAIN GROUND FOR CLADDING AND HARDFACING' see page 37 - page 40 ---	1-11
A	EP,A,0 558 870 (SULZER AG) 8 September 1993 see the whole document --- -/--	1-11

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- *&* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

9 August 1995

Date of mailing of the international search report

22.08.95

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Iverus, D

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Application No

PCT/US 95/05362

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US,A,5 208 431 (UCHIYAMA FUTOSHI ET AL) 4 May 1993 see the whole document ---	1-11
A	DE,A,39 35 009 (INST NAT SCIENCES APPLIQ) 25 April 1991 -----	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/US 95/05362

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US-A-2844939	29-07-58	NONE	
EP-A-0558870	08-09-93	NONE	
US-A-5208431	04-05-93	JP-C- 1813659	18-01-94
		JP-A- 4120259	21-04-92
		JP-B- 5034425	24-05-93
DE-A-3935009	25-04-91	FR-A- 2653369	26-04-91
		GB-A, B 2239875	17-07-91
		IT-B- 1244582	02-08-94
		US-A- 5122632	16-06-92